Essential Commodities (Special Provisions) Act, 1991

663. SHRI JAI PRAKASH AGARWAL : Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Essential Commodities (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 is going to expire in September, 1997;

(b) whether the Government are aware that the Act is undemocratic and ruthless due to which the consumers and traders face great difficulties;

(c) whether the Government have received representation from some Members of Parliament as well as from "Federation of All India Foodgrains Dealers Association", Delhi that the period should not be extended;

(d) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto, and

(e) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). Representation are received from time to time from Members of Parliament and trading community for repealing the Essential Commodities (Special Provisions) Act, 1981. It is stated in these representations that this Act was promulgated when there was an acute shortage of foodgrains in the country and that as at present, there is no shortage of any essential commodity in the country, there is no need for the Act.

(d) and (e). The Essential Commodities (Special Provisions) Act was promulgated to enable the State Governments to ensure quicker disposal of cases under Essential Commodities Act, 1955 in the Courts and also to take stringent punitive action against the offenders. Its further extension or otherwise will be decided in due course in consultation with the State Governments/UT Administrations.

[Translation]

Cooperative Sugar Mills in Maharashtra

664. SHRI BHIMRAO VISHNUJI BADADE : Will he Minister of FOOD be pleased to state :

(a) the number of Co-operative Sugar Mills unctioning in Maharashtra and the number out of them which are financially sound;

(b) the number of mills against whom the Government loan is outstanding;

(c) the reasons for difference in the prices of ugarcane paid by the sugar mills to the farmers at various places though the expenditure incurred by the farmers on production of sugarcane is same at various places;

(d) whether the Government propose to ensure payment of equal price for the sugarcane by all sugar mills to all sugarcane growers at the various places; and

(e) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) In the state of Maharashtra, there are 106 installed sugar factories in the cooperative sector out of which 104 mills were functioning during the season 1995-96 (Oct. to 1995 to Sept. 1996). Central Government does not maintain statistics relating to financial soundness of sugar mills.

(b) Out of the sugar mills in the country, there is only one sugar mill in Maharashtra (Jijamata SSK Ltd shakarnagar, Distt. Puldana) against whom Central Government loan is outstanding.

(c) The Central Government notifies the zonewise statutory minimum prices payable for sugarcane relating to each sugar season. Some of the State Governments advise higher prices for sugarcane.

(d) There is no such proposal under consideration at present.

(e) Does not arise.

[English]

Scam in NDMC

665. SHRI JAI PRAKASH (Hardoi) : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the CBI has unearthed a multicrore embezzlement scam in the New Delhi Municipal Council;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by the Government therein;

(c) whether there is any proposal to evaluate the working of the Council to find for itself as to the number of other departments where such conditions prevail;

(d) whether there are hundreds of shops in the NDMC markets that need to be regularised and even the monthly licence fee is not being taken from many of them; and

(e) if so, whether there is any proposal to enquire into the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR) : (a) and (b). The requisite information is given in the attached statement.

(c) The New Delhi Municipal Council has recently appointed a Chief Auditor under section 33 of the New

Delhi Municipal Council Act, 1994. The Chief Auditor is charged with the statutory responsibility of examining and auditing the accounts of the Council for which purpose he is given access to all the records and correspondence relating to the accounts.

(d) and (e). The shops in the NDMC markets are alloted under prescribed procedures. The question of regularisation arises only when there is a change in the allottee, etc. In all such cases the allotment is regularised after ensuring that the applicant fulfils the prescribed criteria. No largescale pendency of such cases has been reported. The licensees/license holders who fail to make the payment of monthly license fee in accordance with the demands raised are served with notices and action as required under the NDMC Act is taken.

STATEMENT

During the course of investigation so far, it has come to light that NDMC had granted a contract for computerisation of electricity/water bills to M/s. Software Consultants India Pvt. Ltd. in 1985. In 1992, this firm was also awarded the contract for collection of these bills from the consumers.

2. For this purpose 4 counters were opened at Parliament Annexe, Kidwai Nagar, Palika Bhawan and Gole Market in 1992 and later on more centres were opened at Bengali Market, Kaka Nagar, Nirman Bhavan, Palika Kendra.

3. Since the billing and collection of electricity and water bills were assigned to the same agency, it used to collect full amount of the bills from the consumers, issue computerised receipts and simultaneously enter these receipts in the computers. After daily collections, some persons of the agency used to copy the entries of daily collection stored in the computer in a separate computer file and thereafter resort to at random manipulations of the collection entries in this file by reducing the amount actually collected from different consumers. Thus, difference of the actual collection and the amount shown in the manipulated collection statement, that was being submitted to the NDMC alongwith the cash collected on the next day, was being misappropriated.

4. The Computer file containing actual collection was used for the purpose of issuing the next bills to the Consumers so that no arrears would get reflected in the bills on the consumers. Only the bills of the private consumer's were being manipulated.

5. Although the manipulated statements alongwith reduced cash were deposited with the NDMC cash section on the next day, the statement showing actual collection was used to be deposited at the end of the year with the Rent Section of the NDMC. This encouraged/enabled the agency to parpetuate the fraud over a long period.

6. Investigation has so far revealed that by way of the above mentioned modus operandi the owner of the agency had misappropriated a sum of Rs. 6 crores approximatel by from March 1996 to 27th September, 1996, when the fraud was detected. Starting with lesser amounts, the misappropriation in the later stages appears to be to the tune of approximately Rs. 30 lakhs per month. Further investigation in this scam is in progress and NDMC has been requested by the CBI to conduct a Special Audit for helping the CBI in ascertaining the full amount misappropriated by way of this fraud.

[Translation]

Centrally Sponsored Schemes in Maharashtra

666. SHRI DATTA MEGHE : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) the financial assistance provided to the Maharashtra Government for implementing various Centrally Sponsored Schemes to increase the agricultural production during the Eighth Five Year Plan; and

(b) the number of farmers benefited therefrom?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) A sum of Rs. 342 crore has been released to Government of Maharashtra so far under various Plan Schemes for development of Agriculture during the Eighth Plan.

(b) The farmers benefitted from these schemes both directly and indirectly. Hence, it is difficult to quantify the number of farmers benefitted.

[English]

Inadequate Equipping of ITBP

667. SHRI G. VENKAT SWAMY
SHRI UTTAMSINGH PAWAR :

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the statement made by the Director General of ITBP expressing concern over the delaying in equipping the para-military forces, engaged in fighting proxy war situation with latest weaponry to counter the terrorists in sensitive parts of the country;

(b) if so, the details of the proposals received from them and the status of the proposals; and

(c) the time by which a decision is likely to be taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR) : (a) to (c). Upgradation of weaponry in para-military forces is